THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

P.O. BOX 8 KING, ONT., CANADA

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You'll notice from the dateline on this issue that we have changed to a bi-monthly publication schedule. This was done, not because of any slackening of interest, but because getting the Newsletter out is a pretty strenuous and time-consuming job. Rather than put ourselves through the mill once a month, we voted to give ourselves a bit more breathing space by publishing six issues a year. This will allow us to devote more time to Society correspondence and projects and, incidentally, to our families and jobs which in some cases have been suffering from neglect.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

Many of you have written asking about the origins of The Ragtime Society and how it was first set up. Since we are now in our fourth year of publishing the Newsletter, it might be appropriate here to describe briefly how it all came about. We would also like to take this chance to introduce (or re-introduce) your Society executive -- who they are, what they do, and a little bit about their backgrounds:

In 1959, one Bob Darch came to Toronto, opening a new nitery devoted to "ragtime." For many of us, this was a new word; certainly the type of music played was new to our ears. Darch was able to evoke sufficient interest in us to start us on a search for ragtime sheet music. It soon became obvious that the regular sheet music channels just didn't have what we wanted . . . in fact, most of them had never even heard of the titles, composers or publishers of early ragtime.

Darch came regularly to Toronto and soon drew around him a handful of devotees to ragtime. Joseph Lamb came to town; Eubie Blake came. Interest continued to grow, and some of us began to have a little success in locating sheet music. More than two years went by, then in late 1961 a group of interested people decided that it would be much more efficient and less time-consuming to organize the reproduction of the various pieces of sheet music which each of us was finding and copying for the others. The search was on for other interested parties, and these were not long in coming to our doorstep. In January of 1962 The Ragtime Society, dedicated to the preservation of classic ragtime, was born. Volume 1, Number 1 of the Newsletter was printed and mailed in February, and since that time membership has grown from a handful to several hundred.

The Society is non-profit, sustaining itself through the sale of sheet music, LP records and, when available, books. No operating income is derived from advertising, since it is felt that when interest in ragtime and/or the Society falls to the point where sufficient income to carry on is no longer forthcoming, the Society will have fulfilled its purpose, and will then cease to exist. It would appear that we will be around for quite a while, however.

As originally set up, the Society consisted of the efforts of three people. John Fisher, as Chairman, wrote and published the Newsletter, gathering material for it where and when possible. He gave impetus to the Society in its early days with publicity, and loaned much of his extensive sheet music collection for reproduction. Unfortunately, John found it necessary to relinquish his duties as Chairman about two years ago because of job demands, and has been inactive in the Society's affairs since.

As Secretary, the Society has Jim Kinnear, who handles the mail, answers letters (when possible), maintains stocks of all material provided by the Society, and arranges for the printing of sheet music.

Jim is a partner in Alumicor Limited, a Toronto firm specializing in commercial sealants. Until recently he travelled extensively across Canada and the States on business, and it was on these trips that he acquired much of his fine collection of piano rolls and original sheet music. He used to haunt small-town music stores, pawn shops and secondhand furniture stores, picking up gems for anywhere from a nickel to fifty cents apiece.

Jim never took formal piano lessons, and when he became interested in ragtime he virtually had to sit down and teach himself to read and play. "I wore out three Darch records, learning his numbers note for note," he says, and the Darch influence is very pronounced in his playing.

Another of the Society's original founders is its Treasurer, Mrs. Idamay MacInnes, who keeps the books, handles the bank account and pays the bills (when there is money).

Idamay and her husband Allen own and operate Newgate Showrooms, a wholesale outlet for domestic and imported furniture, fabrics and antiques. In a den at the rear of the showroom is a magnificent Heintzman upright grand player, and this retreat is a regular gathering place for prolonged lunch hours with the MacInnes's many ragtime friends.

Idamay and Allen live in an antique-filled, 150-year-old farmhouse in Toronto's north end where they maintain three more pianos. Allen doesn't play piano, but performs very capably on the player. Idamay studied classical music extensively and plays and sight reads very well. Over the years the MacInnes's have played host to a list of ragtime performers that reads like a "Who's Who In Ragtime," but Idamay says her most cherished possession is a tape of duets she performed with Max Morath on one of his last visits to Toronto.

Bob Ashforth has been writing the Newsletter for the past half year or so in the capacity of Editor. He also writes those controver-

sial Record Reviews, arranges for much of the Society artwork and most of the printing involved with the Newsletter and other publicity.

Bob is a copywriter by trade and handles public relations for the Manufacturers Life Insurance Company. Like many other fans, he was converted to ragtime by a chance visit to Club 76 and the playing of Bob Darch; a few months later he saw Jim Kinnear on a local TV show, learned about the Society and joined up.

Up to that time, Bob says he had spent about 20 years looking for a type of music he could really get wrapped up in. "I guess I went through the whole bit, from Goodman and Shaw through the N.O. revival to Brubeck and the MJQ -- but nothing seemed to offer the sustained interest. Then came ragtime!"

Bob's formal piano training covered about eight years, then because he couldn't find a jazz-oriented teacher, he dropped the lessons and launched out on his own. He describes himself as "an introverted piano player -- a non-performer."

The Society is very grateful to the many other members who live at some distance and who have contributed in the form of articles, or excerpts from letters, or just plain reminiscences of the early years. These contributions are very necessary, and we hope that they will continue. Any society is as large as the sum of the individual efforts put into it, and ours is no exception.

Editorial

THE SPIRIT OF RAG

Right from the beginning, we are told, ragtime was split into two camps over the "correct way to play it" controversy. Today, 75 years later, the rift is as great as ever - perhaps even greater, because the basic conflict has now assumed the proportions of a legend.

To the question os what "Slow March Tempo" and "Do Not Play Fast" meant in the minds of the composers, there are those among us who feel the only positive answer lies in Joplin's hand-played rolls. But these, naturally, were "Sunday-best" performances. Did Joplin always play MAPLE LEAF at 72 metronome? Did he never sneak into the front parlor when no one was listening and rattle it off at 125 or so, just for the sheer hell of it?

On the question of improvisation in ragtime, deviations from the score do appear in certain rolls played by Joplin. Now, if he strayed from the score for all the world to hear, is it unreasonable to assume that in private he also improvised on his established themes, and perhaps quite freely at that? After all, he possessed a creative and inventive mind; it is difficult to believe that his musical soul was so rigid as to entirely exclude the joys of improvising.

Perhaps Joplin, Scott and the other classicists truly felt their music was being prostituted when the pianists of the day injected their own ideas into it. But the Old Masters had brought forth a

schizoid music form, one that openly begged for improvisation, and whether they approved or not didn't make much difference to the course of history.

We who love ragtime should not perpetuate this controversy, even though it is part of the legend. We should not go about proclaiming that there is only one way to play ragtime - for this is utter nonsense. Improvisation in ragtime is a fait accompli; the question of its "correctness" becomes a matter of academic lint-picking.

Ragtime has much to offer each of us, if we will only accept it. The only limitations to good ragtime are the skills of the performer and the esthetic tastes of the listener. But the performer or listener who summarily dismisses improvised rag as sacrilege is certainly living only half a ragtime life. The same is true of his counterpart who never really explored the full depths of "as written" ragtime before condemning it as square.

Rather than pigeon-hole ourselves and each other as traditionalists or modernists, purists or reformists, let's keep alive what Max Morath so aptly calls "the spirit of rag." Happy indeed is the enthusiast who can accept and enjoy all aspects of our wonderful music, for he is certainly living a full ragtime life.

PERFORMERS

On February 15th a new club opened in Toronto - the Golden Nugget - headlined by none other than Bob Darch, who sounds as great as ever after an absence of some 18 months. Bob's contract arrangements had not been finalized at press time, but it appears likely that he'll be at the Golden Nugget for eight to ten weeks. The club is handsomely done in a plush Las Vegas decor and the management plans to continue the ragtime theme; we'll keep you posted on developments.

Harold Doerr reports that Gary Ellison is playing to good audiences at the newly-opened Red Garter in Springfield, Mo.

Bruce Eickmeier of Hamilton, Ont., tells us he has heard that Johnny Maddox will be at the Drake Hotel in Regina, Sask., for all of July and the first week of August -- good news for our Western Canadian members. Bruce adds: "Since the Club 76 has turned into such a sad (and I mean real sad) disappointment, we frequently go to the Ports of Call to hear Bonnie Roberts and Johnny Arpin, as well as the dixieland group."

Jerry Stockton, Dunbar, W. Va.: "Our club, The Charleston Jazz Club, is planning on having Kenny Ball for a session on May 6th. Kenny is on his way to New Zealand and I have heard may also stop in Memphis and New Orleans. I hope to have Ron Weatherburn stay at our house the night the band is here."

We're happy to welcome Alex Roberts as a new Society member. "Big Alex" performs nightly at Diamond Lil's in Toronto's west-end Skyline Hotel. His publicity material tells us that he owns a vintage 85-key Steinbach piano.

COMMENT
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As anticipated, the Knocky Parker record review touched off a further flood of letters; relevant comments have been excerpted below. The only word we'd like to add is that we are delighted to have stirred up this discussion -- this way we find out in a hurry what your tastes and preferences are.

On the matter of certain performers being "below our notice," this may appear to be the case, but it is purely unintentional. The only reason we have not discussed, reviewed or promoted a given ragtime performer is simply because we have not heard of him or have never heard his records. For example, we have long felt remiss for not discussing the work of Ralph Sutton, but our knowledge of him is minimal, and we have never heard a record by him. Also, the record situation in this country is often woefully behind the times -- Hank Jones's "This Is Ragtime Now" still hasn't been released here. Therefore, we are extremely grateful when someone like Bill Mitchell takes the time to send along unsolicited reviews (see page 14).

If you have a favorite performer who you would like to see promoted in the Newsletter, we will be more than happy to do it - if you will tell us about it. Record reviews, personality profiles, playing dates -- these are what the Newsletter is for, and this is an open invitation to you to contribute items of this nature.

Bob McWhirter, California: "I will be the first to admit that some of (Parker's) performances aren't too good, but some cannot be equalled by anyone. As for restraint - what about Morath? Parker's performances of such numbers as REFLECTION (Joplin's best), LEOLA, HARMONY CLUB, LILY QUEEN and KISMET are some of the best ragtime performances to be heard . . . Of course his MAPLE LEAF and NEW RAG I usually skip but they are in the minority.

"Parker's performances represent the beautiful, idyllic antiquity of one of the best periods in American history . . . (they) are enjoyably tranquil . . . he plays some numbers at fast speeds that most of your other performers couldn't keep up with and play so neatly at the same time."

Howard Martin, Seattle: "The attitude of the Society toward various performers of ragtime continues to puzzle me. It seems to consist of pushing certain players - pushing them constantly, for example: Tom Shea in particular, followed by Bob Darch and Max Morath. Ann Charters is on the list of the fairhaired. But, if my observation is correct, both Wally Rose and Knocky Parker are singled out for disapproval, which at times amounts to obvious prejudice. And as for Ralph Sutton, as well as Armand Hug, they are quite below your notice. Objective, did you say?

"Everyone is entitled to his own preferences in playing style. For those of us who have struggled and searched painfully for good ragtime on wax, sensitively performed, by musicians who are neither anateurs nor speed maniacs, with fine balance between melody and rhythm -- well, Ralph Sutton, Wally Rose, Knocky Parker and a few others have given us our first real breath of life . . . Parker's two sets of Joplin and Scott were a rich addition to our meagre list of records."

Vincent Terbois, Geneva: "In your last Newsletter I noted the bitter attack . . . against Parker's playing. I myself directly objected to him about it, especially concerning the funny basses he uses sometimes."

Peter Lundberg, Sweden: "Re Jay Bain's coming to the rescue of Wally Rose - nor am I very impressed by his album - chief objections being his substitution of 4/4 instead of 2/4 in most of the rags -- also he sounds a bit too cold or at least lukewarm. But, there is no denying his sincerity and skill. It is quite a shame that he is not offered any new chances of doing a good ragtime album - sans bass and drums.

"(Re the Parker review) I completely agree with the reviewer - Parker's playing is about as rousing as a ..... - but I wouldn't say it's bad ragtime. There is ragtime and ragtime, and not all ragtime sounds like Darch or Campbell. A lot of the Big Three's output has always struck me as highly suitable for the cocktail lounge, provided it is interpreted in about the manner Mr. Parker utilizes. So, I'd say that although these albums are by no means of worth as 'authoritative reference sources' (on account of all their deviations from the scores), they are certainly excellent as background and mood music."

Charles Davis, Jr., N. Carolina: "I would like to comment on the fine (Parker) review. Being a great friend and fan of Knocky, I was set back by some of the statements, but after careful thought and consideration I can agree on all points except Knocky being called a 'cocktail pianist.' To me, cocktail pianism is associated with Frankie Carle, the Duchins, Peter Nero and others of the same calibre. Knocky could never be considered in this league for (1) he got much of his training in the Negro dives and saloons of Texas hearing such men as Blind Lemon Jefferson and others, and (2) he thinks of ragtime as great music and would not step down to 'cocktail pianism.' His favorite pianist was one of the greats of ragtime, James P. Johnson, who always played in a subtle manner with flawless phrasing and an understatement not found in others of the Harlem 'stride' school . . .

"Critics differ and it is up to the buyer to select who he likes. Leonard Feather in the 1965 Down Beat Yearbook wrote a very good article on critics as critics and musicians as critics. Everyone should read it to understand critics better."

RECORD REVIEWS

N.B. Each of the records reviewed below has also been reviewed by Society member John S. Wilson in recent issues of "High Fidelity" magazine. For reference, the appropriate issue and page number is noted at the end of our reviews.

"Prairie Ragtime" - Tom Shea; The Ragtime Society RSR #2

"This Is Ragtime Now" - Hank Jones; ABC-Paramount 496

Reviewed by Bill Mitchell:

Two marvellous records have graced my turntable lately; both are devoted to the spirit of classic ragtime, yet each has its own distinctive approach.

Tom Shea's second record for The Ragtime Society is an even finer contribution than his first. The recording quality is superb, capturing a virile foot-stomping that is metronomic, incisive, and an enhancement to the music, not a distraction. Shea is of the vigorous, assertive school of ragtime interpretation, and on side one, featuring the classic rags, he falls into a characteristic tempo which is a trifle up. On side two, which displays his own compositions, he reveals more versatility, ranging from the brilliant barrelhouse of BRUN CAMPBELL EXPRESS to the delicate melodiousness of TRILLIUM RAG. These two numbers are, for my money, the best of the lot. I am also very fond of PEGTOWN PATROL, particularly the first theme. CORINTHIAN RAG, while an intricate achievement, does not have the immediate appeal of the others cited.

The other record has been a great surprise to many of us. Hank Jones, a modern who placed among the top pianists in the recent Down Beat Readers' Poll, has been so intrigued by his discovery of classic ragtime that he has presented us with a brilliant album, "This Is Ragtime Now!" He brings off a performance that will please practically all ragophiles, whatever their quirks and foibles. The secret is, briefly, that he has his cake (or cakewalk, let's say) and eats it too. By this I mean that he is faithful to the printed scores, yet indulges in free-swinging embellishment - all on the same rags. He follows this formula: each theme is stated as written; then the theme is restated a la Hank Jones, in a style that reveals his early Waller influence. Be not misled, however. The first themes are not played as they must have been by the turn-of-the-century men; they have a kind of easy legato propulsion that is patently a jazz influence (he is supported by Milt Hinton, bass, and Osie Johnson, drums). Having said this, however, I do not mean to imply that Jones does not play ragtime. The title puts it quite appositively: "This Is Ragtime Now!"

The numbers Jones chooses are brilliant. Joplin is represented by MAPLE LEAF, THE CASCADES, SUNFLOWER SLOW DRAG and the relatively obscure EUGENIA. Lamb's great RAGTIME NIGHTINGALE is here, as well as SENSATION and BOHEMIA and CONTENTMENT RAG. This last is not one of Lamb's best, but BOHEMIA certainly is, and here gets its first piano version on record. Tom Turpin's ST. LOUIS RAG, and Jos. Northrup's THE CANNONBALL are trotted out also. The final two numbers are not classic ragtime. Manny Albam's JAZZ MAN RAG is a pleasant little tune, and Jones contributes a number of his own, BAG O' RAGS, which emerges as his tribute to the spirit of classic rags.

These two records most certainly belong in the collection of serious ragophiles, and will be played far more often than most of the documentary LP's that have appeared in recent years. They are virtually peerless.

The Tom Shea album is reviewed in "High Fidelity" magazine, March issue, page 128; the Hank Jones LP is reviewed in the December issue, page 118.

RSR #2 is available from the Society @ $5.00 postpaid in Canada and U.S., add 50¢ to overseas orders. RSR #1 is fast becoming a collector's item - there are less than ten copies left in stock; the combination offer - $8.50 for both albums, plus 50¢ for total overseas orders - will stand until RSR #1 is out of print.

The Society has ordered the Hank Jones album, but has not received delivery yet; we'll keep you posted.

"Oh, Play That Thing!" - Max Morath; Epic - LN24106
Vocal accompaniment by the Jordonaires

Cakewalkin' Shoes	Euphonic Sounds
Hello, Ma Baby	Easy Winners
Climax Rag	If You Don't Have Any Money
Elisa Listen	Dorianna
Cubanola Glide	Original Rags
Mister Johnson, Turn Me Loose	Save It For Me

Reviewed by Bob Ashforth

Those of you who saw Max and the Original Rag Quartet on the Bell Telephone Hour, February 2nd, will have had a pretty accurate preview of this album. It contains eight rag songs, and four piano solos with rhythm accompaniment. The prevailing mood of the entire LP is one of unconfined high humor; it sounds as if everyone is having a real ball, particularly Max. MISTER JOHNSON and DORIANNA are standout vocal numbers, with Max's sparkling piano work shining through, as it does on every number. Each piano solo is a gem; EASY WINNERS is an example of superb, almost fugue-like harmony between the piano and the sensitively played banjo.

The musicianship, arrangements and recording quality of this album are first-rate, and the "spirit of rag" is strong throughout. If it leaves the slightest thing to complain about, it is a positive complaint -- as with the Bell Telephone show, I wished (selfishly) that the LP had been just a bit more of a showcase for Max's solo piano. Perhaps his next Epic album will be just that.

This Morath LP is also reviewed in "High Fidelity" - page 110, December issue.

The above album - LN24106 - and Max's earlier Epic album - "Waltzes, Shouts, Novelties, Rags, Blues, Ballads and Stomps" LN24066 - are available from the Society @ $4.50 each, or both for $8.50; add 50¢ to total overseas orders.

OTHER RECORDS

We would also mention, for your consideration, "The Sound of Harlem" (C3L-33) from Columbia's Jazz Archive Series of reissues. This prize-package of three 12" LP's has several numbers of interest to early piano buffs: SOUNDS OF AFRICA, Eubie Blake (1921); KEEP OFF THE GRASS, James P. Johnson (1921); SATISFIED BLUES, Lemuel Fowler (1923); and DRAGGIN' MY POOR HEART AROUND, Fats Waller (1931). Plus the bands: Henderson, Armstrong, Calloway, Hawkins, Carter, Lunceford, Ellington, etc, and the female vocalists: Billie Holliday, the Smith girls - Bessie, Mamie and Clara - Ethel Waters, Alberta Hunter, et al. The accompanying discography and history of Harlem and the clubs (in words and photos) is very well done. (Not stocked by the Society.)

This album is also reviewed in "High Fidelity" magazine, December issue, page 118.

Larry Nusser enquires: "Ihave heard something to the effect that Trebor Tichenor and the St. Louis Ragtimers have made at least one record, but am having a bad time trying to obtain one. Maybe you folks

would know something about a record by that reputedly excellent group, as well as some by Toni Parenti."

The Ragtimers have produced a record, and we suggest you write direct to Treb at P.O. Box 8568, St. Louis, Mo., 63026, for information. Perhaps some of our readers could help Larry on the question of Parenti records; Larry's address is 117 Marks Ave., Lancaster, Ohio.

SOCIAL NOTES (Merrie England Division)

Brian Bulgin writes: "Judging from the pictures, you had a pretty good time at the soiree. The only thing is that over here, if we had an 'intimate bash' of both sexes, we wouldn't dare have photos taken. Has your correspondence shown any ground swell for a similar meeting of U.K. ragophiles? If so, who have been the interested parties - I wouldn't mind hopping on board if anything came up. I couldn't undertake to organize anything except in Ludlow and this town may be a bit remote for some rag nuts."

Yours is the first ripple so far, Brian, but how about you U.K. types talking it up and deciding on a suitable location. (Medmenham Abbey, perhaps? You've shattered our image of the traditionally reserved British!) Newsletter coverage guaranteed - including photos.

FROM OUR READERS

Larry Nusser, Ohio: "When I first received word about The Ragtime Society I practically did hand stands because I thought here is a group of individuals devoted to an American music which, although it was associated by its very name with wickedness in its infancy and was hardly taken as a serious music even during its period of popularity, and only a few years ago was all but forgotten, only a quaint name from the distant (?) past, deserves to be preserved as part of our heritage. Well, over the past year I have been quite pleased with the Society; even though I expected a publication of merit, I was still surprised by the many interesting articles, reviews, letters and comments concentrated in your Newsletters, as well as the sheet music, folios and records available through the Society; which brings us to the subject of the two fine records by Tom Shea - the classic rags are indeed played with spirit and a good old-fashioned ragtime feeling, and Tom's own original compositions are certainly the kind that is going to keep ragtime alive. Those two records have the high honors in my collection of ragtime records. So all in all I am more than satisfied with my subscription to the Ragtime Society and only wish I had known about you sooner by a couple of years."

We have received notice of the Annual International Jazz Festival of New Orleans, Louisiana, Inc. (P.O. Box 52612, N.O., La., 70150) taking place June 28, 29 & 30 at Lutjens Dance Hall, 2300 Chartres St. The festival will feature "strictly traditional jazz music" with musicians and bands from England, Sweden, Germany and U.S.A. Suggest you write them direct at the above P.O. Box address, if interested.

From B. F. O'Toole: "I have for sale a 1914 model Wurlitzer piano, formerly automatic (and manual) coin operated. For this gem I am asking $300." (As with all items of this nature, we present it for your information, but cannot vouch in any way for the merchandise offered. Mr. O'Toole's address is 541 O'Connell Rd., Peterborough, Ontario, Canada.)

Vincent Terbois writes: "I was greatly surprised at the excellent presentation of Tom Shea's record (RSR #2). The hard cover is equal to any one released by the great record companies. As for the contents, I think that Tom is more at ease when playing his own compositions. I wouldn't mind seeing some of them published. Now I am anxious to see what RSR #3 will contain."

Raymond Scribner, our Australian correspondent, wrote thanking us for a recent shipment of sheet music, and added: "The Ragtime book looks good and seems to be an essential to one's library, many tunes I have only just heard or read about. It will be an immense help to me and my little jazz band I have in Newcastle. The local lads here have just completed successfully playing host to 400 musicians at the 19th annual Australian Jazz Convention . . . we are quite proud it was so well attended, a total of 56 traditional styled bands making an appearance. It will be weeks before we come out of orbit!"

Joseph Davidson, 6001 Henning St., Bethesda, Md., 20034, says he is very interested in a piece called THE ORIENTAL BLUES, used by Ernie Kovacs on his TV specials years ago. Anyone who can help him out should write to the above address.

Peter Lundberg, Sweden: "Some time ago there was somebody asking in the Newsletter WHY the old New Orleans bands did not play ragtime correctly. The question should probably best be answered by somebody who was actually around in those days (like Roy Carew) or who knows the subject (like Charters) but, anyway, what first comes to mind is, how do we know that the N.O. jazz bands played ragtime badly, incorrectly and so forth? There seems to be some evidence that contradicts this. For one thing, the better bands (Creole) seem to have prided themselves on being able to play the standard ragtime orchestrations correctly from the music, and probably did. I guess one could not object very much to the recent examples of this style as exemplified by the Love-Jiles Ragtime Orchestra, or Charlie Love and Emile Barnes recordings (other than to faulty intonation and other signs of the advanced age of the participants). On the other hand, the N.O. type of orchestra, being a stripped down theatre band, is best suited to a polyphonic music, and thus might not let a more complex work of Lamb or Joplin come to an advantage. One might perhaps also say that the reason for the N.O. jazz bands not playing ragtime in the usual fashion was because they were JAZZ bands. Anyway, to my ears there is a lot of ragtime in the playing of the earlier figures of New Orleans music - like Keppard, Bocage and Love, and Bacquet, Picou and Louis Nelson (his solo on BYE & BYE on American Music strikes me as beautiful ragtime). Also, recordings like Bunk Johnson's MAPLE LEAVES (on trumpet solo and one piano solo) - in correct tempo, with very high fidelity to the written score, even though he probably hadn't played them in a couple of decades - show that the better New Orleans musicians held ragtime in high regard and played it without violating the composers' intentions too much."

From Russ Cole, Arkansas: "The expression 'classic ragtime' is a rather recently-introduced one so far as I know. I note Max Morath's answer, in the January Newsletter, to your question, 'What is classic ragtime?' It seems to leave the matter somewhat up in the air, or open to further or continuing examination by ragtime enthusiasts at large. The term's meaning has escaped me. And of the many comments on the subject that have made their way here, the one that carries the most weight for this oldtimer is 'Ragtime is Ragtime' (from Percy Franks).

"The published material from the ragtime people who are now formed into dues-paying associations appears to pay a first allegiance to Scott Joplin's

MAPLE LEAF RAG, which Stark published in 1899. The eminence of this opus in the story of ragtime in America is universally acknowledged, but why it takes perhaps first place with the classicists, while Ben Harney (who came to New York out of the South in the Nineties to become an overnight sensation as a ragtime player), is unnoticed by them, so far as I know, remains unexplained here.

"In other words, we who were around when 'Boom de Ay' was discovered in Babe Connor's place in St. Louis as the Nineties started up, and when the 'Hot Time' tune took words and entered the ragtime-song race of the second Cleveland and first McKinley administrations (only to wait around two years for the war with Spain to bring it out), await enlightenment as to just what it is about a specimen of syncopation that makes it 'classic ragtime,' while countless of the world's favorite old ragtime numbers apparently go rejected by the modernists.

"The only person who knows what the ragtime craze of the Nineties and early 1900's was like is the person who was an interested party at the time. 'Boom de Ay' turned up on the American scene in 1891. Theodore Metz, orchestra leader from Germany, claimed to have composed the 'Hot Time' tune in the Eighties while travelling with McIntyre & Heath, but the melody's origin remained obscure. Hayden's words were set to it in 1896 as the ragtime furore increased - and the country hailed offerings like May Irwin's (born in Whitby, Ontario) BULLY SONG, Barney Fagan's MY GAL IS A HIGH BORN LADY and Ben Harney's MR. JOHNSON, TURN ME LOOSE and YOU'VE BEEN A GOOD OLD WAGON BUT YOU'VE DONE BROKE DOWN.

"As the decade moved toward the new century, the cakewalk became a rage. GEORGIA CAMP MEETING and the Abe Holzmann numbers, including BUNCH O' BLACK-BERRIES and SMOKY MOKES, were among the popular works in this genre.

"The present popularity of the smash of 1902, BILL BAILEY, is remarkable.

"OLD DAN TUCKER, BUFFALO GALS and others of the 1840's suggest the advanced age of ragtime in fact, and give rise to the suggestion that, way back there in the jungles, there were drum beats that would have had the Gay Nineties strutters doing their utmost.

"Roller skating caught it from the pulpits in the Eighties, as ragtime did a little later on - not perhaps because of the music, per se, so much as for some of the things associated with it in those days. I'm ready to testify that some of the most intriguing music ever to reach my ears could have been styled dive music by the eyebrow-lifters.

"For years I've tried to recall who the colored fellows were, in vaude-ville, who offered a piano-and-song act in which, to ragtime piano accom-paniment, the singer impersonated a lady at an afternoon tea. It was ragtime and imitation at their finest, with the house swinging as one person."

Bill Saunders, Willowdale, Ont.: "If any of our Toronto members wish to study the piano from scratch (as I did) or simply to take a refresher course in one particular field, I can heartily recommend the services of Mr. F. Barker, 1014 Mount Pleasant Rd., telephone 483-5092." Bill says that Mr. Barker came to Canada from England in 1910, got his first job playing ragtime piano and selling the sheet music at 15¢ per copy or seven for a dollar.